

Tar Sands Showdown: Guide to Municipal Action

The following is an action proposal for consideration by workshop participants arising out of our discussions.

Context:

In Canada many municipalities have been at the forefront of Canadian efforts to combat global warming and build strong and sustainable industries. In fact, municipal initiatives to cut emissions are actively contributing to Canada's Kyoto Protocol target to cut emissions to six percent below 1990 levels by 2010.

Unfortunately, Canada is failing to meet its climate commitments, in large part due to the development of the tar sands, which are one of the world's dirtiest sources of oil. The use of oil derived from tar sands is of great concern as Canadian cities seek to create new sustainable jobs and ensure that energy security and climate protection go hand-in-hand.

What Can Municipalities Do?

In addition to taking action on climate change by investing in green infrastructure like public transportation and improving building standards, municipalities can do a number of things directly related to the tar sands.

Municipalities are themselves purchasers of fuel for municipal vehicles. Given that the production of tar sands oil emits significantly more carbon dioxide than conventional oil, municipalities can prevent or discontinue the purchase of higher-carbon unconventional fuels for their vehicles.

Take Action Now!

- Contact your municipality and ask them what the purchasing policy is for high-carbon fuels
- Encourage your municipality to adapt a low-carbon fuels purchasing policy by passing a resolution on the issue.
- Contact your local city councilors and mayor and ask them to sponsor a resolution.

Sample Municipal Resolution:

Municipal Resolution

High-Carbon Fuels and the Tar Sands

WHEREAS, the production and burning of conventional fuel such as gasoline and diesel by motor vehicles contributes to air pollution and increased carbon dioxide emissions that have been linked to global climate change; and,

WHEREAS, the production of unconventional tar sands oil emits approximately three to five times the carbon dioxide pollution per barrel as does conventional oil production and significantly damages Canada's Boreal forest ecosystem – the world's largest carbon storehouse; and,

WHEREAS, the increased carbon production from the tar sands alone will prevent Canada from reaching its international targets under the UN Convention on Climate Change; and,

WHEREAS, First Nations communities near tar sands development have raised concerns over unusually high rates of rare cancers and the lack of recognition of aboriginal title and treaty rights; and

WHEREAS, the Canadian Tar Sands industry has affected the Canadian economy, from coast to coast, by driving up costs of living and diverting federal funding from regional development; and

WHEREAS, climate change can be efficiently and effectively addressed by investing in municipal infrastructure, including public transportation, building standards and more; and

WHEREAS, infrastructure investment acts as an economic stimulus, building and maintaining good jobs and healthy communities;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the (insert municipality) endorse the use of lifecycle analyses that evaluate the greenhouse gas emissions from the production – including extraction, refining, and transportation – of fuels.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the (insert municipality) agree to track and reduce the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions from municipal vehicles by preventing or discontinuing the purchase of higher-carbon unconventional fuels for these vehicles.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the (insert municipality) encourage the province of (insert province) and Government of Canada to phase out the purchase of high-carbon unconventional fuels.